

2002 Xeriscape Contest Awards Presentations

Each year, the Arizona Department of Water Resources' Tucson Active Management Area office, along with Tucson's Tohono Chul Park, host a Xeriscape competition for homeowners and landscape professionals. *(For information about upcoming competitions, call the Tucson AMA at (520) 770-3816.)*

HOMEOWNER AWARDS

Homeowner First Place: Tag Merrick and Kelly Frink



Tag and Kelly said in their application that they have dedicated the last seven years planting and building the garden areas and structures that make up their one-acre landscape. Their dedication shows. The judges said that this entry:

- offered "good human scale,"
- was an "excellent example of a non-lawn yard with high interest"
- has "lots of whimsy" and
- used water harvesting effectively

Homeowner Second Place: Jenny Coniglio

The second place homeowner has been making her landscape "HER" garden since 1999. She inherited a few vines, some daleas and a myoporum from previous owners of the house and has since added more drought-tolerant plants and colorful pots to create her masterpiece. The judge's response:

- Shade garden is very attractive and draws hummingbirds
- Beautiful pot combinations
- Good use of desert plants



PROFESSIONAL AWARDS & SPECIAL CATEGORIES

Best Use Of Native Plants To Attract Wildlife: John Chinnock for The Nature Conservancy's Tucson Conservation Center



This landscape designer worked with a committee of staff from the Nature Conservancy to create a landscape design that reflected the conservation mission and community values of the Conservancy. The project used only plants that are native to the Sonoran and Chihuahuan Deserts in a creative way. The judges felt the landscape exhibited a colorful use of native plants and that it was nice to see the large variety of plants that were used to create this effect.

Best Revegetation Of Disturbed Desert: Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

This organization had the task of re-vegetating an area on their property that had been disturbed by the creation of footpaths that were no longer needed. The goal was to blend the area in with the surrounding undisturbed vegetation so that you could not tell that there was ever a path there. The project was a great success as can be heard in the words of the judges:

- Almost undetectable ... perfect match of natural materials
- Grounds prepared to look like adjacent areas and contoured to match
- This kind of landscape is most successful when you can't tell where it starts and ends...superb!



PUBLIC EDUCATION

First Place: Sage Landscape Architecture For The Saguaro Girl Scout Hacienda

The Girl Scouts wanted to create a nature trail, outdoor amphitheater, donor recognition wall and also needed some habitat restoration in their retreat. Sage assisted them in creating these components and blending them in nicely with the existing landscape.

The judges felt that sage did a nice job of locating the amphitheater, keeping the existing mesquites and the view of the mountains as a backdrop to the stage. They said combining the native mesquites with the wall to screen the river view works well.

Second Place: Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum



Interpretation and education is what this organization is known for. Visitors come from all over the world to learn about the sonoran desert, its plants and animals in this museum. You've already heard what a fabulous job they did with their revegetation, and the interpretation of this revegetation is worth an award as well.

When this revegetation project was created, a publication was developed entitled "gardening the desert museum way", which details the processes the desert museum utilizes to for revegetation and their general philosophy for planting in desert regions. It provides guidance and inspiration to anyone wanting to revegetate their plot of land.

JUDGES AWARDS

Judges' Award For Most Water Efficient Landscape: Sheilah Jaramillo and Fabian Gomez

This landscape included a variety of scenarios to draw your interest, but what was most noticeable to the judges were the extraordinary efforts these homeowners took to use water efficiently. From the wells around the trees to the water harvesting off the roof, it is apparent that these homeowners are aware of the importance of water when gardening and landscaping in the desert.



Judges' Award For Attracting Urban Wildlife: Clay Thompson, Landscape Designer



The goal for this residence was to blend in plantings to enhance and maintain the integrity of the natural desert around the house. Planting salvia, justicia, penstemons, lantana, hesperaloe and anisacanthus provide masses of color and also attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Plantings of berberis trifoliata and chihuahuan sage provide a backdrop against the existing creosote and provides habitat extensions for quail and doves. The beautiful, large palo verde in the back yard draws bees when in bloom and nesting birds all year round. These are just some of the features that make this landscape the judges' choice for the attracting urban wildlife award.

Judges Award For Best Low-Maintenance Landscape: John M. Harlow, Jr.,

The owner's requirement for this landscape was that there be no leaves to clean up or find laying at the bottom of the pool. To achieve this effect, this designer used a variety of cacti to create diverse shapes and colors when in bloom. The judges were impressed, saying the landscape included a good mix of cacti and agaves, good variation of color and forms, and is very nice, clean and has lots of interest.



Judges Award For Best Retrofit Of A High-Water Using Landscape: Margaret West, Designer



The homeowners at this residence wanted to redesign their landscaping to create a more "native look." The previous homeowners had a large lawn in the back yard and two mature mesquites in the front, both severely neglected. The conversion came in the form of some self-sowing perennials, chihuahuan desert natives and small regional cacti in the front yard. In the back yard, a small portion of the lawn was retained and more drought-tolerant plants like salvias, ocotillos, golden fire barrels, and echinopsis were planted. This entry is being awarded the best retro-fit of a high-water using landscape because it reduces water use with flair. According to the judges, it contains good interspersing of small plants with flagstone near spa, an attractive combination of desert perennials, and it utilized great use of hardscape and brightly colored walls in back.

SPECIAL AWARDS

Distinguished Xeriscape Award: John Chinnock for The Nature Conservancy's Tucson Conservation Center

The premise for this award is that the winner's entry incorporates all the principles of xeriscape, for example, water harvesting, use of pervious pavement in a commercial setting and use of a variety of low-water use plants, zoned by water use. This project included enhancing water harvesting through depressed rock-lined swales at downspouts to direct runoff through planting areas and parking lots, using 100% Chihuahuan and Sonoran desert natives in an aesthetically pleasing and easy-to-maintain manner and using gravelpave to improve water harvesting and as an alternative to asphalt paving. The judges enjoyed the large variety of plants used and felt these created a colorful and inviting space that is consistent with the organization's biodiversity goal.

The Community Xeriscape Leader Award: Greg Starr, Starr Nursery

This award recognizes an individual or organization that has been a driving force in promoting Xeriscape principles and/or the use of native and arid-adapted plants.

Greg is one of the foremost proponents of Xeriscape in the Southwest. He is well known as an expert on low water use plants, and has spent most of his life popularizing and promoting the use of xeric plants such as agave, leucophyllum, dalea and many of the now common species used in Xeriscapes.

Starr Nursery has specialized in agaves, cacti and a limited number of xeric shrub species for many years. Greg participated in "collecting expeditions" to Mexico with Warren Jones in the early 1980's and with Ron Gass and other prominent growers and designers in the late 1980s and 1990s.

His work included the domestication of *dalea capitata*, *dalea lutea*, *dalea versicolor* and *dalea frutescens*. He was instrumental in bringing agaves such as *agave schidigera*, *agave striata*, *agave wocomahi* and others into cultivation.

Greg has written numerous articles for many respected horticulture publications. Greg holds a BS and a MS in plant sciences from the U of A and has spent most of his adult life developing and promoting low-water use plants, which are on most palettes of Xeriscape landscapes in Southern Arizona.